

Lisa Lipton – High on a Hill

Lisa Lipton's installation *High on a Hill* creates a space where the viewer's interior and exterior landscapes play a game of hide and seek with one another. The show invites our imaginations to fill in the blanks that the artist has provided, but once the blanks have been filled we see that the result was inevitable. Any sense of imaginative control is soon shown to be an illusion, as Lipton leads us through this world of symbols and suggestions that all end in the same ingenious reality.

The installation cuts across numerous media synthesizing sculpture, painting, performance, video and architecture into a dynamic environment in which space seems to expand and collapse, fluctuating between the two and three-dimensional. Against the iconographic Appalachian Hills, Miss Heidi and an unnamed young man goatherd cross the landscape of the gallery; traversing the floor, scaling the walls, and hanging high from the ceiling. As the saga of the young pair intensifies, Lipton inserts poignant but fictitious inventions to highlight states of loneliness, isolation and miscommunication. With the melting of snow comes the cooling of hearts and the degeneration of ideals—the ideal of young love set in an untouched landscape. The Utopias presented are constructed so that as we acknowledge their erosion so too must we see the reality behind the innocent veneer of Hollywood's most treasured illusions. By superimposing certain environmental realities (i.e. melting snow caps) upon the realm of traditional Hollywood cinema and pop cultural strategies of mass-entertainment, *High on a Hill* takes the utopian ideologies of Western Culture and reveals their sublimation, reversing the process and offering instead an experience that is complete in its physical, sensory, and emotional topography; harder to face, if more honest.

The juxtaposition of these environmental realities within our own Utopian diversions is particularly poignant as we come to understand more how our relationship to that environment is mediated by human perception. This understanding seems to grow parallel to our awareness of a fundamental environmental loss. The passive viewer is spurred into the role of an engaged participant. Not only is Lipton's installation directly responsive to incoming viewers, but like a yodel, she has created space where the beckoning of possibilities, the posing of questions, and the sound of an echo may be heard.

Originally from Halifax, Tanya Busse is an artist, writer and freelance photographer currently living and working in Berlin, Germany.